



State Representative **Doug Ericksen**

2004 Legislative Session

42nd Legislative District

February 2004

Dear Friends,

The 2004 legislative session began on January 12. The 60 day session provides an opportunity for your legislators to inspire and to lead—to create a state in which every citizen has the opportunity to reach their full potential. In this short legislative session I'm committed to following a simple model to produce great results: Identify the problem, but focus on the solution.

In 2003 we clearly identified a problem: the Boeing Company can build airplanes in other states for 25 percent less than Washington. The solution was equally clear: Washington make changes to its regulatory environment, revise unemployment laws, and provide tax relief. The Legislature made progress last session. Now it is time to apply the Boeing model to the rest of Washington businesses large and small.

My priorities for the 2004 legislative session are driven by solutions to the problems that we face.

- Provide regulatory and tax relief for aluminum smelters in Washington
- Help all businesses through comprehensive legal liability reform
- Contain the costs of health care with medical malpractice reform and small group options
- Build roads quickly and efficiently while shaping a 21st Century Transportation vision
- Hold the line on government growth and spending

We must never forget that a strong social safety net is built upon a strong economic base.

In 2004 we have the opportunity to move past the “politics of no,” and focus on solutions. We have the opportunity to offer inspiration and leadership for a better Washington that will unite us around common goals that protect our quality of life.

The issues highlighted in this newsletter will provide you with more information on what I doing to keep Washington a great place to live, work and raise a family. Remember, I am here to serve you and represent your views. If you have any questions or concerns about the issues I am working on, please feel free to contact me and share your views.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your State Representative.

Sincerely,

Doug Ericksen, State Representative

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State govt. on the Internet: access.wa.gov

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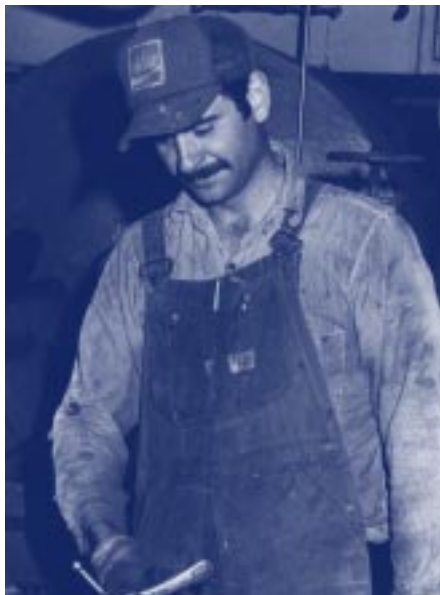
KEEPING ALCOA INTALCO WORKS IN WHATCOM COUNTY

Last session the competition to bring Boeing's 7E7 assembly in Washington was the wakeup call the Legislature needed to make important changes to improve our state's business climate. It was a revelation for some folks when they found out it's 25 percent more expensive for Boeing to build a plane in our state. It just stands to reason it also 25 percent more expensive to operate an aluminum smelter. The Legislature needs to lower taxes and reform regulations for all job providers in our state.

Since the 2003 session ended I've been working with a broad base of people to create a four point plan to keep Alcoa Intalco Works operating and growing in Whatcom County that would include the following components:

- Lock in an electricity rate reduction from the BPA
- Put in place temporary tax relief for the aluminum industry in Washington
- Adopt regulatory changes to the business climate in Washington to make it clear that we value these jobs
- Secure a long term energy source for our aluminum smelter at a reasonable and reliable price.

Sixty days isn't a lot of time, but I have confidence it can be done. The Legislature proved last session it can come together and create a package of bills to provide the tax incentives and regulatory reforms necessary to keep the aerospace industry in Washington. Now we need to apply the Boeing-model to other businesses, such as, the aluminum industry in our state.



IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Washington families are finding access to health care services dwindling. Government rules and regulations, mandated coverage, escalating medical malpractice premiums are a few of the barriers to patient based health care which are driving up the cost of health care and forcing doctors out of Washington. Escalating medical malpractice premiums are forcing doctors to leave the state and prompting health care providers to close their doors or limit the services they offer.

The Legislature must protect access to health care by putting the needs of families first. Reducing costly government mandates and eliminating the stranglehold of our legal system on health care providers will help us offer families access to more-affordable health care services.

Small businesses are the backbone of our state's economy with seventy-six percent of Washingtonians working for small businesses. Many employees can't get health care coverage because it's too expensive for their employers. There are more lower-and middle-class working Washingtonians without insurance than ever before. In large part, because there are too many government rules telling health insurers what they must put in their health plans. Removing government mandates will give employers greater flexibility to offer affordable basic health coverage for working families.

I am supporting legislation to reign in out-of-control lawsuits and reduce the number of government required for small-group insurance providers.



2004 Legislative Session

HOLDING THE LINE ON SPENDING

We fought hard last session to close a \$2.7 billion budget deficit without increasing taxes. To move away from this fiscally responsible approach would risk a tax increase and deep cuts in services for people who truly need government assistance. Any budget expenditures this year must be limited to critical adjustments, such as school enrollment growth, and emergency needs so that we maintain a responsible, sustainable budget that protects taxpayers.

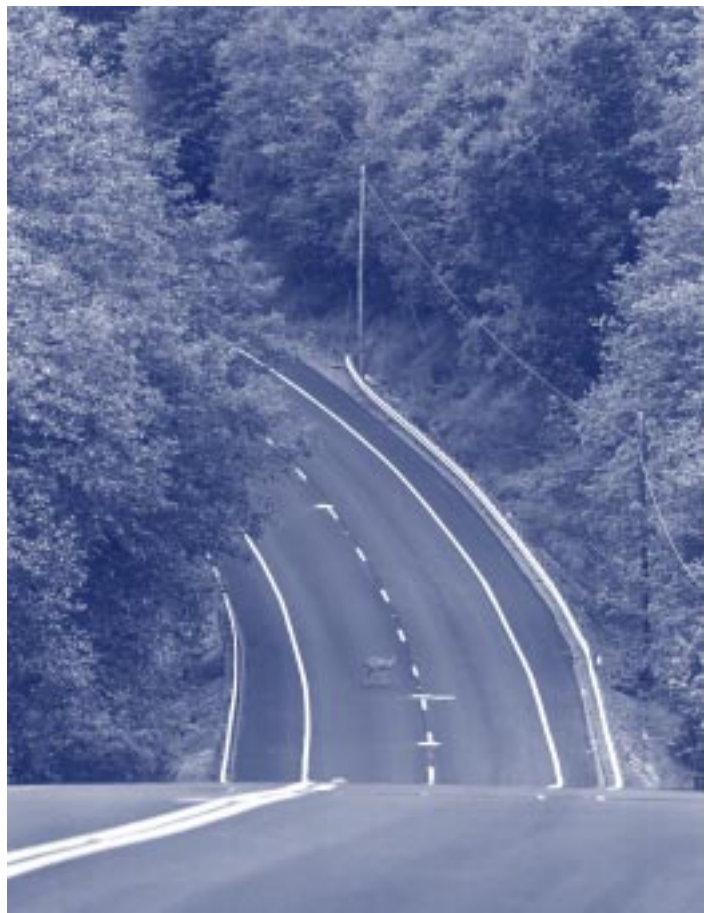
This session we will adopt a supplemental budget which makes adjustments to the budget passed last year that accounts for unanticipated spending such as higher increases in school enrollment, flooding or forest fires. The governor has proposed a supplemental budget that uses at least \$158 million in one-time money to pay for new, ongoing expenditures. His proposal would leave enough money in reserve to cover potential natural disasters. I believe his approach abandons the progress we fought so hard to make last year. The governor's budget proposal would spend down our reserves to a dangerous level, and if enacted, would leave Washington more than \$1 billion in the red by next biennium. Irresponsible budgeting practices such as this, is precisely the reason our state had to dig its way out of an enormous budget deficit last year.

I'll continue to stand firm against new taxes and unnecessary spending. It is critical for the Legislature to hold the line on state spending and stay the course on fiscal responsibility. We can't move away from this approach at a time when we are just beginning to see an improvement in our state's economic situation. If we go back to a spendthrift mentality, we risk an increase in taxes and deep cuts in services for the people who truly need government assistance. That is simply unacceptable.



FIXING WHATCOM COUNTY ROADS

As the lead House Republican member of the Transportation Committee, I will be working to maximize our ability to improve Whatcom County roads to benefit our region's long term economic goals. In addition to improving the quality of life for Whatcom County citizens our efforts will also accommodate the many visitors who visit our region leading up to, during and after the 2010 Olympic games being held in Vancouver B.C.



The influx of Olympic-related tourists will boost our local economy, but the level to which Whatcom County benefits from the games will, in large part, depend on how well state, federal and local officials work together and plan for the onslaught of tourists traveling through Northwest Washington. The better we prepare, the more we stand to gain. I stand ready, willing and able to provide the leadership needed to make sure Whatcom County seizes this opportunity and has the infrastructure in place to make sure traffic flows freely.

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HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN THE 2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Information about the 2004 legislative session is as close as your keyboard. There are plenty of ways to get involved and stay informed on issues important to you.



Information on the Internet:

State government:

www.access.wa.gov

Legislative information:

www.hrc.leg.wa.gov

Other ways to get information and assistance:

I would be happy to speak to your group, organization or school. Topics might include:

- Issues before the Legislature
- How does the legislative process work?
- What it's like to be a legislator
- Issues specific to the 42nd legislative district

Ask for assistance.

Legislators are elected to serve you. If you are facing challenges working with a state agency, contact me to see if I can help.

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